

Message Text

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SUBJECT: INTSUM 365 - JULY 25, 1977

MOSCOW, KUHAIT, SANA FOR AMBASSADORS

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING

WARNING NOTICE SENSITIVE SOURCES AND METHODS INVOLVED
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1. EGYPT-LIBYA. ARAB MEDIATION EFFORTS TO ARRANGE A
CEASEFIRE BETWEEN EGYPT AND LIBYA APPARENTLY SUCCEEDED
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YESTERDAY, ALTHOUGH EGYPTIAN-INITIATED MILITARY ACTIVITY
CONTINUED THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE DAY. PUBLIC ARAB
REACTION TO THE FIGHTING HAS BEEN GENERALLY CRITICAL OF
EGYPT, DESPITE THE FACT THAT SOME MODERATE ARAB LEADERS
PROBABLY ENJOY THE IDEA OF QADHAFI BEING TAUGHT A LESSON.

2. REFLECTING THE GENERAL ARAB CONCERN, ARAB LEAGUE
SECRETARY GENERAL RIAD YESTERDAY SENT MESSAGES TO ARAB
FOREIGN MINISTERS ASKING THEM TO SUPPORT ARAFAT'S EFFORTS

TO ESTABLISH A CEASEFIRE. ALGERIAN PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE FLEW TO TRIPOLI WHERE HE MET QADHAFI AND THEN ON TO EGYPT FOR A MEETING WITH SADAT. KUWAIT'S FOREIGN MINISTER ALSO LEFT FOR EGYPT AND LIBYA ON A PEACE MISSION. ACCORDING TO RADIO CAIRO, PRESIDENT SADAT, AFTER AN AFTERNOON MEETING WITH BOUMEDIENE, ISSUED ORDERS TO EGYPTIAN FORCES ON THE BORDER TO CEASE MILITARY OPERATIONS. EGYPT THUS ACCEPTED THE CEASEFIRE, JOINING LIBYA WHICH HAD REPORTEDLY ALREADY DONE SO.

3. WE DO NOT DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY OF RENEWED FIGHTING. TENSIONS REMAIN HIGH AND INCIDENTS COULD LEAD TO NEW CLASHES. WE DO BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE CEASEFIRE WILL HOLD, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT TERM. THE LIBYAN MILITARY HAS BEEN STUNG BY THE EGYPTIANS, AND CONTINUATION OF THE FIGHTING HOLDS LITTLE HOPE FOR AN IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR POSITION.

4. FOR HIS PART, SADAT HAS SEVERAL REASONS FOR APPEARING RESPONSIVE TO THE ARAB APPEALS FOR PEACE (THE TONE OF HIS JULY 22 SPEECH COMMEMORATING THE 1952 REVOLUTION HAD ACTUALLY LEFT THE DOOR OPEN TO AN EARLY CESSATION OF MILITARY OPERATIONS),

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(A) THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY HAS MADE ITS POINT WITH QADHAFI, BUT THE COSTS OF THE FIGHTING ARE ADDING UP (FOR EXAMPLE TWO, POSSIBLY MORE, EGYPTIAN AIRCRAFT WERE LOST IN YESTEAY'S OPERATIONS).

(B) EGYPT'S ATTACKS ON LIBYA MAY NOT BE POPULAR AMONG MANY SECTIONS OF THE EGYPTIAN POPULATION.

(C) ARAB REACTION, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SUDAN, HAS NOT BEEN SUPPORTIVE OF EGYPT, AND SOME HAS BEEN HIGHLY CRITICAL OF CONTINUED FIGHTING.

5. MILITARY ACTIVITY ON JULY 24, AS IT HAS BEEN FOR THE LAST THREE DAYS, CONTINUED TO BE INITIATED BY EGYPT. THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY APPARENTLY IMPLEMENTED SOME LAST MINUTE OPERATIONS BEFORE THE CEASEFIRE, IN ORDER TO CRIPPLE FURTHER LIBYA'S AIR CAPABILITY AND TO DEMONSTRATE EGYPT'S ABILITY TO CONDUCT COMMANDO OPERATIONS AGAINST LIBYAN TERRORIST TRAINING CAMPS.

6. WE BELIEVE SADAT IS SINCERE IN HIS ACCEPTANCE OF THE CEASEFIRE AND DO NOT EXPECT EGYPT TO RENEW ITS ATTACKS UNLESS PROVOKED BY LIBYAN ACTIONS. THE TOPPLING OF THE QADHAFI REGIME, HOWEVER, REMAINS ONE OF SADAT'S PARAMOUNT GOALS. -

7. QADHAFI, FOR HIS PART, FACES A DIFFICULT DECISION.

IN VIEW OF EGYPT'S MILITARY SUPERIORITY, HE CAN TAKE THE ARAB UNITY LINE OF SELF RESTRAINT, CALL ON ARAB BROTHERS TO MEDIATE, AND ARGUE THAT LIBYA CANNOT FIGHT THE EGYPTIANS BECAUSE EVERY CASUALTY IN A LIBYA-EGYPT CONFLICT IS ONE LESS SOLDIER TO FIGHT ISRAEL. OR HE CAN ORDER THE LIBYAN ARMY TO FACE UP TO THE EGYPTIAN THREAT AND SATISFY LIBYA'S HONOR.

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8. THE FIRST SOVIET PUBLIC REACTION STEERED A DELIBERATELY NEUTRAL COURSE. MOSCOW RADIO TERMED THE CLASHES "DISTURBING," BUT CAREFULLY AVOIDED TAKING SIDES OR HINTING THAT THE USSR MIGHT BECOME INVOLVED. THE BROADCAST IMPLICITLY WELCOMED EFFORTS BY ARAFAT AND THE ARAB LEAGUE TO DEFUSE THE CONFLICT, AND FOCUSSED PRIMARILY ON ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE, WARNED THAT EMERGENCE OF A NEW POINT OF CONFRONTATION IN THE ARAB WORLD NOW COULD "ONLY PLEASE TEL AVIV AND ITS PROTECTORS" (I.E., THE US). AT THE SAME TIME, WE HAVE DETECTED NO APPARENT SOVIET MILITARY RESPONSE TO THE OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING. THERE IS NO INDICATION OF UNUSUAL MOVEMENTS BY SHIPS OF THE SOVIET MEDITERRANEAN SQUADRON. (SECRET)

9. ISRAEL. IN A SERIES OF PUBLIC REMARKS OVER THE WEEK-END WHILE IN NEW YORK, BEGIN CONTINUED TO STRESS SEVERAL THEMES.:

(A) ALTHOUGH THERE WERE US-ISRAELI DIFFERENCES OVER SOME MIDEAST ISSUES, HIS MEETINGS WITH US LEADERS HAD BEEN CORDIAL AND THERE HAD BEEN NO "CONFRONTATION";

(B) THE PLO CANNOT BE INCLUDED IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT PALESTINIANS COULD JOIN THE JORDANIAN DELEGATION FOR TALKS;

(C) "MIXED COMMISSIONS" OR PROXIMITY TALKS COULD BE UTILIZED AS A WAY OF RESTARTING NEGOTIATIONS AS ALTERNATIVES TO GENEVA;

(D) THE JEWISH PEOPLE ARE ALSO PALESTINIANS, AND AS SUCH
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HAVE A HISTORIC RIGHT TO THE TERRITORY OF PALESTINE.

BEGIN ALSO SAID THAT, DURING HIS WASHINGTON TALKS, HE HAD REJECTED A US OFFER TO GUARANTEE ISRAEL'S SECURITY ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS.

10. THE ISRAELI PRESS REACTION TO BEGIN'S VISIT HAS GENERALLY BEEN FAVORABLE, DESCRIBING IT AS A SUCCESS. MOST PAPERS HAVE NOTED THE CORDIAL ATMOSPHERE OF BEGIN'S WASHINGTON TALKS AND THE GENERAL THEME IS THAT SOME MEASURE OF AGREEMENT WAS REACHED ON PROCEDURAL MATTERS DESIGNED TO GET NEGOTIATIONS IN TRAIN. US-ISRAELI DIFFERENCES OVER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES, HOWEVER, REMAIN UNRESOLVED, MOST PAPERS HAVE OBSERVED.

11. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE WORLD CONGRESS OF NORTH AFRICAN JEWS, SHAUL BEN-SHIMON, TOLD EMBASSY TEL AVIV THAT THE SEPHARDIC JEWISH COMMUNITY IS PUZZLED BY MOROCCAN INVITATIONS TO PROMINENT ISRAELIS OF NORTH AFRICAN ORIGIN TO VISIT MOROCCO AND BE RECEIVED BY KING HASSAN. (THE MAYOR OF ASHKELON IS CURRENTLY IN MOROCCO, AND BEN-SHIMON VISITED THERE LAST MONTH.) BEN-SHIMON SAID THAT BEGIN AND DAYAN HAVE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE POTENTIAL USEFULNESS OF THE "MOROCCAN CONNECTION" FOR INITIATING AN ARAB JEWISH DIALOGUE, BUT WILL NOT GIVE IT OFFICIAL SANCTION UNTIL MOROCCAN INTENTIONS BECOME CLEARER. (CONFIDENTIAL)

12. SYRIA. RADIO DAMASCUS COMMENTED OVER THE WEEKEND THAT THE US IS NOW EXPECTED TO PRESENT ITS SPECIFIC CONCEPTS OF THE BASIS OF A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. ALTHOUGH THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAS MADE SEVERAL POSITIVE STATEMENTS, THE BROADCAST CONTINUED, RECENT PRONOUNCEMENTS SINCE THE BEGIN VISIT HAVE "GREATLY WEAKENED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE POSITIVE INDICATIONS AND CREATED DOUBTS.

13. MOREOVER, IN ANEWSWEEK INTERVIEW DUE TO APPEAR
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TOMORROW, PRESIDENT A PEACE PLAN A
"NON-STARTER." ASSAD CHARACTERIZED THE PLAN AS AN ATTEMPT TO LEGALIZE ISRAELI OCCUPATION AND TO "BURY THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE," WHICH HE SAYS ARE STILL THE BASIC ISSUE IN THE CONFLICT.

14. ASSAD TAKES A VERY TOUGH STANCE TOWARD NEGOTIATIONS. HE DENIES ANY INTEREST IN NEGOTIATING A SEPARATE ISRAELI PULLBACK ON THE GO
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